In this particular volume the issue of art as interference and the strategies that it should adopt have been reframed within the structures of contemporary technology as well as within the frameworks of interactions between art, science and media. What sort of interference should be chosen, if one at all, remains a personal choice for each artist, curator, critic and historian.
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Interference Strategies

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TRANSVERSAL INTERFERENCE
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Interference Strategies: Its Art in the Middle?

If we look at the etymological structure of the word "interference," we would have to get back to reconstruct that interference as a cause of the two Latin words: inter (in between) and ferre (to carry), but with a particular attention to the meaning of the word "ferre" (to carry), in opposition to the English "to render decent" the naked bodies of Michelangelo of a word not in order to develop a sterile academic artwork and the artist with the viewer (in between) and forward the idea of interference as a contribution to Michelangelo's vision.

Interference as a word that assembles a multitude of meanings: interpreted according to the perspective of the etymological structure as to construct a militarization, a militarization, and an acceleration of inequalities of interaction between two parties. In this book, there are series of representations of these interferences, as well as a series of questions on what is the possible contingent, formal, and interference - digital, scientific, and aesthetic - and what are the strategies that can be adopted in order to actually interfere.

The complexity of the strategies of interference within contemporary political, aesthetic, and technological discourse appears to be summed up by the perception that the interference is necessarily an act of gesture. This perception appears to exclude the possibility that there is a very existence of a work of art in itself as an interference - an act of interfering, an aesthetic, an action that has become too much consensus to act; hence, interfering with a political project.

Interfering artworks, which by their own nature challenge systems, were an artist working on the exhibition of Interference Kunst (1999). This cultural and ideological undermining of the National SocialistGerman Warists. It is still possible to produce. The idea of cultural and ideological undermining of the National Socialist-German Warists. It is still possible to produce. The idea of cultural and ideological undermining of the National Socialist-German Warists. It is still possible to produce.

What sort of interference should be chosen, if one at all? remains a personal choice (for each artist, curator, critic, and historian). If I had to choose, personally, I think that this interference could not be to favor art that shrouds propaganda or business under a veil with the name of art repeatedly written in capital letters all over it. That does not leave very much choice in a world where interference is no longer acceptable, on it is unacceptable, on it is unacceptable; it is not only within pre-established contractual operative frameworks, it is not only within pre-established contractual operative frameworks, it is not only within pre-established contractual operative frameworks, it is not only within pre-established contractual operative frameworks.
Interference Strategies: Is Art in the Middle?

If we look at the etymological structure of the word interference, we would have to go back to a construct that defines it as a sum of the two Latin words inter (in between) and ferro (to strike), but with a particular attention to the meaning of the word ferro being interpreted principally as to wound. Albeit perhaps etymologically incorrect, it may be preferable to think of the word interference as a composite of inter (in between) and the Latin verb ferro (to carry), which would bring forward the idea of interference as a contribution brought in the middle of two arguments, two ideas, two constructs.

It is important to acknowledge the etymological root of a word not in order to develop a sterile academic exercise, but in order to clarify the ideological underpinnings of arguments that are then summed up and characterized by a word.

This book, titled Interference Strategies, does not (and in all honesty could not) provide a resolution to a complex interaction - that of artistic interferences - that has a complex historical tradition. In fact, it is impossible, for me, when analyzing the issue of interference, not to think of the Breeches Maker (also known as Daniele da Volterra) and the coverings that he painted following a 1559 commission from Pope Paul IV to ‘render decent’ the naked bodies of Michelangelo Buonarroti’s frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. That act, in the eyes of a contemporary viewer, was a wound inflicted in between the relationship created by the artwork and the artist with the viewer (intentio operis and intenio auctoris with intenio lectoris), as Umereto Eco would put it. Those famous breeches appear to be both: a form of censorship as well as interference with Michelangelo’s vision.

Interference is a word that assembles a multitude of meanings interpreted according to one’s perspective and ideological constructs as a meddling, a disturbance, and an alteration of modalities of interaction between two parties. In this book, there are a series of representations of these interferences, as well as a series of questions on what are the possible contemporary forms of interference - digital, scientific and aesthetic - and what are the strategies that could be adopted in order to actively interfere.

The complexity of the strategies of interference within contemporary political and aesthetic discourses appears to be summed up by the perception that interference is a necessarily active gesture. This perception appears to exclude the fact that sometimes the very existence of an artwork is based on an interfering nature, or on an aesthetic that has come to be as non-consonant to and, hence, interfering with a political project.

Interfering artworks, which by their own nature challenge a system, were the artworks chosen for the exhibition Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art) exhibitions to the many images of pompously strutting corporate tycoons and billionaires in museums and art fairs around the globe, glancing with pride over the propaganda, or - better - over the breeches that they have commissioned artists to produce.

Today’s contemporary art should be interfering more and more with art itself, it should be corrupted and disrupting, degenerate and degenerating. It should be producing what currently it is not and it should create a wound within art itself, able to alter current thinking and modalities of engagement. It should be - to quote Pablo Picasso - ‘an instrument of war able to interfere.’

If art should either strike or bring something is part of what has been a long aesthetic conversation that preceded the Avant-garde movement or the deconstructive fury of the early Futurists. In this particular volume the issue of art as interference and the strategies that it should adopt have been reframed within the structures of contemporary technology as well as within the frameworks of interactions between art, science and media.

What sort of interference should be chosen, if one at all, remains a personal choice for each artist, curator, critic and historian.

If I had to choose, personally I find myself increasingly favoring art that does not deliver what is expected, what is obvious, what can be hung on a wall and can be matched to tastepieces. Nor can I find myself able to favor art that shrouds propaganda or business under a veil with the name of art repeatedly written in capital letters all over it. That does not leave very much choice in a world where interference is no longer acceptable, or if it is acceptable, it is so only within pre-established contractual operative frameworks, therefore losing its ‘interference value.’

This leaves the great conundrum - are interferences still possible? There are still spaces and opportunities for interference, and this volume is one of these remaining areas, but they are interstitial spaces and are shrinking fast, leaving an overwhelming Baudrillardian desert produced by the conspirators of art and made of a multitude of breeches.
In this introduction I cannot touch upon all the different aspects of interference analyzed, like in the case of data and waves presented by Adam Nash, who argues that the digital is in itself and per se a form of interference: at least a form of interference with behavioral systems and with what can be defined as the illusory realm of everyday’s ‘real.’

Transversal interference, as in the case of Anna Munster, is a socio-political divide where heterogeneity is the monster, the wound, the interfering and dreaded element that threatens the ‘homologation’ of scientific thought.

With Darren Tofts and Lisa Gye it is the perusal of the artwork, its buyers, consumers and aesthetic hierarchies that were disrupted by laughter in the Middle Ages might be disrupted today by viral, artistic and scientific research. This famous conference announced the genesis of quantum theory and, with that, Werner Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. These events are linked historically and inform interesting experiments that interfere, affect and observe their thoughts on the strategies for interference, at the intersection between art, science and culture, that form new dialogues.

In October 1927 the Fifth Solvay International Conference marked a point in time that created a unifying seepage between art and science and opened the gateway to uncertainty and therefore the parallels of artistic and scientific research. This famous conference analyzed the genesis of quantum theory and, with that, Werner Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. These events are linked historically and inform interesting experimental art practices to reveal the subtle shift that can ensue from a moment in time.

The simple yet highly developed double slit experiment identifies the problem of measurement in the quantum world. If you are measuring the position of a particle you cannot measure its momentum. This is one of the main theories that have been constantly tested and still remains persistent. The double slit experiment, first initiated by Thomas Young, exposes a quintessential quantum phenomenon, which, through Heisenberg theory, demonstrates the quantum universe as a series of probabilities that enabled the Newtonian view of the world to be seriously challenged.

The role of the publication, as a vehicle to promote and encourage transdisciplinary research, is to question what fine art image-making is contributing to the current discourse on images. The publication brings together researchers, artists and cultural thinkers to speculate, contest and share their thoughts on the strategies for interference, at the intersection between art, science and culture, that form new dialogues.

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My very personal thanks go to Paul Thomas and the authors in this book who have endeavor to comply with our guidelines to deliver a new milestone in the history of LEA.

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Lanfranco Aceti
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REFERENCES AND NOTES


The theme of ‘interference strategies for art’ reflects a literal merging of sources, an interplay between factors, and acts as a metaphor for the interaction of art and science, the essence of transdisciplinary study. The revealing of metaphors for interference “that equates different and even ‘incommensurable’ concepts can, therefore, be a very fruitful source of insight.”

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If the measurement intra-action plays a constitutive role in what is measured, then it matters how something is explored. In fact, this is born out empirically in experiments with matter (and energy): when electrons (or light) are measured using one kind of apparatus, they are waves; if they are measured in a complementary way, they are particles. Notice that what we’re talking about here is not simply some object reacting differently to different prods but being differently.

In the double slit experiment that travel through the slits interfere with themselves enabling each particle to create a wave-like interference pattern. The underlying concepts upon which this publication is based see the potential for art to interfere, affect and obstruct in order to question what is indefinable. This can only be demonstrated by a closer look at the double slit experiment and the art that is revealed through phenomena of improbability.
When particles go through the slits they act as waves and create the famous interference pattern. The concept is that one particle going through the slit must behave like a wave and interfere with itself to create the band image on the rear receptor.

Interference Strategies looks at the phenomenon of interference and places art at the very centre of the wave/particle dilemma. Can we think of ‘interference’ as a key tactic for temporary forms and strategies of interference the same as historical ones? What kinds of similarities and differences exist?

Application of a process to a medium, or a wave to a particle, for example, the sorting of pixel data, literally interferes with the state of an image, and directly gives new materiality and meaning, allowing interference to be utilised as a conceptual framework for interpretation, and critical reflection.

Interference is not merely combining. Interference is an active process of negotiating between different forces. The artist in this context is a mediator, facilitating the meeting of competitive elements, bringing together and setting up a situation of probabilities.

In response to the questions posed by the conference theme, presentations traversed varied notions of interference in defining image space, the decoding and interpretation of images, the interference between different streams of digital data, and how this knowledge might redefine art and art practice. Within that scope lies the discourse about interference that arises when normal approaches or processes fail, with unanticipated results, the accidental discovery, and its potential in the development of new strategies of investigation.

In "[t]he case of Biophilia: a collective composition of goals and distributed action," Mark Cypher highlights the interference in negotiations between exhibit organisers, and space requirements, and the requirements for artist/artworks, resulting in an outcome that is a combination generated by the competition of two or more interests. As part of the final appearance of Biophilia, the artwork itself contained elements of both interests, an interference of competing interests, comprising a system in which the artist and the artwork are components, and the display a negotiated outcome. Each element interferes with itself as it negotiates the many factors that contribute to the presentation of art. In this sense the creation of the final appearance of Biophilia is the result of the distributed action of many ‘actors’ in a ‘network.’

(To put this in another form all actors are particles and interact with each other to create all possible solutions but when observed, create a single state.)

In summing up concepts of the second Transdisciplinary Imaging conference, particularly in reference to the topic of interference strategies, Edward Colless spoke of some of the aspirations for the topic, entertaining the possibilities of transdisciplinary art as being a contested field, in that many of the conference papers were trying to unravel, contextualise and theorise simultaneously.

The publication aims to demonstrate a combined eclecticism and to extend the discussion by addressing the current state of the image through a multitude of lenses. Through the theme of interference strategies this publication will embrace error and transdisciplinarity as a new vision of how to think, theorise and critique the image, the real and thought itself.

Paul Thomas

REFERENCES AND NOTES

4. Ibid.

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1. LOSING CONTEMPORARY ART

Compared to traditional art forms – such as painting or sculpture – Media Art has a multifarious potential of expression and visualization; although underrepresented on the art market which is driven by economic interests, it therefore became “the art of our time”; thematizing complex challenges for our life and societies, like genetic engineering, the rise of post-human bodies, like ecological crises, like the image and media revolution and with it the explosion of human knowledge, the rapid growing mega-cities, the change towards virtual financial economies and the processes of globalization and surveillance to name just a few. Visually powerful, interactive media art, often supported by databases or the world wide web, is offering more and more degrees of freedom in creative expression and evidently is much better equipped to directly address the challenges of our complex times within the very medium that shapes them. Although it has been around for decades and even quantitatively dominated many art schools, digital media art has not fully arrived in the core collecting institutions of our societies. Due to the lack of institutional support and rapid changes in storage and presentation media, works that originated approximately ten years ago can often not be shown anymore. It is no exaggeration to state that we are facing the ‘total loss of an art form’ created in the early times of our post-industrial digital societies.

ABSTRACT

Considering its technological and thematical contexts, digital art conveys different – even more complex – potentials of expression than traditional art forms (such as sculptures, paintings, etc.), what makes digital art a paradigmatic expression of its time? This article emphasizes the variety of (complex) topics that are expressed within digital art, ranging from globalization, ecological and economic crises (virtual economy), media and image revolution to questions of the body and its societal norms. Due to the imminent problems of archiving, the digital arts are threatened by its loss – a problem that is reinforced by the insufficient practices of cultural institutions to display, collect and research digital art. Post-industrial societies require digital arts based on contemporary media dispositive to reflect upon current and future challenges, just like art history was always informed by its contemporary media technologies. By establishing concerted international strategies and new scientific tools it is the aim of this essay to provide a framework to enable media art histories and image science as well as the digital humanities to engage more fully with current digital developments in order to enable the humanities to meet with its (current) responsibilities. By discussing examples from a variety of projects from the natural sciences and the humanities, this article tries to demonstrate the strategic importance of these collective projects, especially in their growing importance for the humanities.
2. MEDIA ARTS MULTIFARIOUS POTENTIAL OF EXPRESSION

Gerhard Dirmoser has created a diagram to give an overview of the tremendous development that media art went through during thirty years of Ars Electronica. Hundreds of names of artists, of artworks, art trends, theories of media art in keywords, are presented in an enormous circle. Thirty-two slices are offered as a subdivision into themes, like representation, emotion and synesthesia, atmosphere, games, art as spatial experience; here we find glimpses of a history of media art.

Thousands of artworks make use of and express the multifarious potential of media art. In the installations Osmose (1995) and Ephémère (1998) Charlotte Davies transports us into a visually powerful 3D-simulation of a lush mineral-vegetable sphere, which we can explore via a bodily interface consisting of a vest that monitors breathing; both works are classics of digital media art that generated more than one hundred scientific and art-historical articles but were ignored by museum collections.

Open-ended questions about the complicated ethical issues involved in the manipulation of DNA are raised by Eduardo Kac’s installation Genesis.

With UNMAKEABLELOVE Jeffrey Shaw and Sarah Kendall were created in their cybernetic theatre Reactor a real time augmented world of thirty humans inspired by Samuel Beckett’s The Last Ones. In a dark space or even a prison camp formed by a hexagon of six rear-projected silver screens, the artwork functions in the most powerful reappearance and aesthetic interpretation of the phantasmasoria. For years also William Kentridge, one of the most well-known artists of our time, has been working on the subject of a history of vision. Even historic image media, like the mirror anamorphosis, made its way into his contemporary media art. In 2007 he created a hybrid that had not existed before in the media history of seeing. He used his eight min. short What Will Come (Has Already Come) and linked a hand-drawn animation film with the anamorphosis, which appears connected now for the first time with moving images. He is one of the artists helping us to put the latest image revolution into a historical perspective.

Victoria Vesna’s Bodies Incorporated allows visitors to construct their own avatars. Using a variety of web tools, the users can make a 3D representation of their body. References are made throughout the site to identity politics and other concepts used to separate and identify bodies. Also largely ignored by museums was golden Nica awarded Murmuring Fields by Fleischmann & Strauss. The interacting users maneuver through a virtual space of media philosophy, where they can hear statements by Flusser, Virilio, Minsky, and Weizenbaum. Murmuring Fields is a new type of a Denkraum – a sphere of thought – and an early prefiguration of web-based knowledge exchange.

Today we know that the virtualization and increasing complexity of financial products is partly responsible for the global financial crisis that cost us trillions of Euros and Dollars. But already more than a decade ago, the studio Asymptote proposed a 3D info-scape for the NYSE to manage financial data within a real-time virtual environment, providing a better, more transparent image and thereby a better idea of transactions – before we get driven into the next mega-crash. The NYSE, however, did not want further development of a visualization of their “financial products” – and since the Lehman Brothers’ bankruptcy in 2008 we know why.

Ingo Günther’s obsessive cartographic work Worldprocessor – an artwork that implicitly conveys the explosion, ubiquity as well as the availability of data by the introduction and consolidation of digital media. On illuminated globes – appears as a clairvoyant pre-
3. INTEGRATING MEDIA ART INTO ITS MEDIA & IMAGE HISTORIES

It is essential to create an understanding of the fact that the present image revolution, which uses new technologies and has also developed a large number of so far unknown visual expressions, cannot be conceptualized without our image history. Art history and media studies help understand the function of today’s image worlds in their importance for building and forming societies. By telling the history of illusion and immersion, the history of artificial life or the tradition of telepresence, art history offers sub-histories of the present image revolution. Art history might be considered a reservoir in which contemporary processes are embedded, an anthropologic narration, on the one hand, and the political battleground where the clash of images is analyzed, on the other. Furthermore, art-historical methods may strengthen our political-aesthetic analysis of the present through image analyses. Last but not least, the development and significance of new media should be illuminated, since the first utopian expressions of a new medium often take place in artworks.

Older definitions, by Gottfried Böhme, Klaus Sachs-Hombach, or W. J. T. Mitchell, of what an image is became problematical in the context of the digital age. I shall therefore begin by quoting a carefully crafted definition by Thomas Hensel:

**IMAGES are not reducible to a particular technology (like graphic prints or neutron autoradiography), not to certain devices or tools (paint brushes or telescope), not to symbolic forms (perspective), not to genres in the broadest sense (still life or summation image), not to an institution (museum or lab), not to a social function (construction or diagnostics), not to practices/media (painting or Morse Code), materials (canvas or photographic paper) or certain symbolism (Christian iconography or alphabetic code) – but they are virulent in all of them.**

In the current social media based image world it has become even more difficult to provide a definition. Images today, along with the cultures from whence they originated, are on the move; myriads of images flow with extreme mobility in fractions of a second around the globe as messages of transnational and transcultural communication. Images from formerly separate contexts are occupied, interpreted, amalgamated, and given new meanings. What we are seeing at the moment is a shift in our image cultures, which are connected to international media, in the direction of a single image culture that increasingly operates transculturally. Formerly passive recipients – who reflected on discrete works of art in a distanced yet intellectual-ly active manner – have now become interactive users with considerable degrees of freedom. What is more, they have become active mediators and facilitators of image worlds as well as producers of the same in that they increasingly collect, modify, distribute and position images selectively and strategically. New visual information arises not least through dialogue in which one or more networks are involved.

The mise en scène of the images, singly or in clusters, their metamorphoses and their dissemination, are significantly determined by the users of social networks. Vibrant sub-cultures develop with a speed of image turnover that was hitherto unimaginable. Often something completely new arises – from the contradictions, tensions, and differences – which is manifested visually. This process is nothing new for theories of interculturalism: the fruitful fusion of Roman and Greek culture, for example, or of Christian and Islamic culture in medieval Spain, demonstrated this process over long periods of time.

In addition to global icons, seemingly banal but actually highly complex, there are also myriads of image-clouds arranged in clusters, which overlay the globe like a second visual sphere. This is where different ways of seeing the world encounter each other and are negotiated actively; this is where the rudiments of a new culture form. Nevertheless, if one wants to understand an image then the image, at least in part, has to be considered in context. Contexts are becoming more and more complicated due to the many different visual media: also there is now apparently no limit to the acceleration of visual exchange processes, which, because of their multifaceted branching and connections, cannot be captured or analyzed by the instruments employed by the humanities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

If ever the theory of a homogeneous or pure culture, elevated ideologically and repeatedly misused, had any validity, this idea is now virtually obsolete. On the other hand, a theory of culture that is playful and favors egalitarian exchange may be desirable, but it is rather naive when one considers the power of commercial international players to create global icons, the inroads of political control over the networks, language barriers, inadequate knowledge about digital cultural techniques, and the power of certain media concerns that are coming together to form economic cartels.

Building bridges for media art means also to further the establishment of new curricula, and we developed the first international Master of Arts in MediaArtHistories for working professionals (with faculty members like Erikk Huhtamo, Lev Manovich, Christiane Paul and Sean Cubitt) which deals also with the practice and expertise in curation, collecting, preserving and archiving of media arts. Students come from five continents and there is a Facebook forum with more than four thousand members.

Already in the 1990s it became clear, that media art research was spread over many disciplines and the need became urgent to give it some common ground.
4. NEW SCIENTIFIC TOOLS FOR OUR FIELD

Thinking about new tools for media art history in the twenty-first century we remember Warburg’s Mnemosyne Atlas tracking image citations of individual poses and forms across media. We might even say that he redefined art history, as medial bridge-building, arguing that art history could fulfill its responsibility by including most forms of images. Let us remember too, that film studies was started by art historians: the enormous Film Library at New York’s MoMA was founded on an initiative by Barr and Panofsky, nicknamed the “Vatican of Film.” The same spirit for new infrastructures and networks for media art of the last decades is needed today. Although taking a different approach, the history of image databases should also mention André Malraux with his museum imagier. And now we are witnessing the birth of the virtual museum, a key project for the digital humanities.

Looking for a moment beyond the humanities, in the natural sciences during the last decade, large collective projects have addressed new research goals. In astronomy, the Virtual Observatory compiles several centuries of celestial observations. Global warming is understood through projects like the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment, at a detail never before calculable, and the Human Genome Project has become legendary. Comparable to natural sciences, digital media and networked research catapult the humanities within reach of new and essential research in the documentation and preservation of media art, or as a realistic utopia where an entire history of visual media and their human reception might be amalgamated as collections of sources.

In 1999 at Humboldt University the first online media art documentation was originated, known as the Database of Virtual Art (Archive of Digital Art, ADA). This pioneering database documents renowned media artists, researchers and institutions over the last decades of digital installation art, as a collective open source project. Since today’s digital artworks are processual, ephemeral, interactive, multimedial, and fundamentally context dependent they require modification, which we call an “expanded concept of documentation.” As probably the most complex media art resource available online with several thousand documents and related technical data, the database is a platform for information and communication. The ADA, which is the only university-based archive, represents a selection of five hundred of approximately five thousand evaluated artists. The policy determining whether an artist is qualified to become a member includes two criteria: “the number of exhibitions, publications – at least five; high importance we ascribe also to artistic inventions like innovative interfaces, displays or software.” Artists can be nominated by the members of the board.

Media art documentation becomes a resource that facilitates research on the artists and their work for students and academics, who, it is hoped, will further network media art archive next to a historic art collection. The Collection will be further networked with archives of contemporary media art via keywording.

Together with an important graphic print collection, the Göttweg Monastery Collection – representing thirty thousand prints emphasizing Renaissance and Baroque works and a library of one hundred and fifty thousand volumes going back to the ninth century, such as the Sankt Gallen Codex – ADA strives to achieve the goal of a deeper media art historical cross-pollination. Reaching to the present day, the print collection has grown to be the largest private collection of historical graphic art in Austria. Just as the Media Art Histories conference series bridges a gap, the combination of the two and other databases hopes to enable further historic references and impulses. The collection also contains proofs of the history of optical image media, intercultural concepts, caricatures, landscapes in panoramic illustrations. For the future this may provide resources for a broader analysis of media art.

The Göttweg collection is being made public through three strategies:

The “Scientific Facsimile”; high resolution allows researchers the chance to find details in digital prints, which are difficult to discover in the “original” prints.

The concept of Virtual Exhibitions (now adopted by main museums) offers the public online exhibitions since 2006 like “Venetian Views,” or “Theory of Architecture.” Virtual exhibitions are divided into sub-themes and enriched with different picture formats, literature and meta data.

Fortunately, we have the unique situation to have the media art archive next to a historic art collection. The Collection will be further networked with archives of contemporary media art via keywording.

Keywording can be a bridge building tool. The hierarchal thesaurus of ADA constitutes an approach to
systemize the field of digital art. In Out of the Getty Arts & Architecture Thesaurus and the subject cata-
dogue of the Warburg Library in London, keywords were selected which have relevance also in media art. On the other side, out of the most commonly used terms from media festivals like Ars Electronica or Transmediale, new keywords were empirically se-
lected. Important innovations such as “interface” or “genetic art” have been considered as well as keywords, that play a role in traditional arts such as “body”, “land-
scape” or “illusion” and thus have a bridge-building function. It was important to limit the number to approximately three hundred and fifty words so that members of the database could keyword their works without an overly complex index. The categories led to natural overlapping, so that the hybrid artworks could be captured through clustering.

5. FOR INTERNATIONAL AND SUSTAINABLE MEDIA ART RESEARCH

Let me finish with remarks on the challenging and serious situation of media art research today. With ADA involved in the field of tool development, from ART RESEARCH dation in Montreal (1999-2008), Netzspannung at the of the Database of Virtual Art (1999 – ongoing) a system for the media art forms with the one for digital culture then we un-
derstand how inadequate the support for our present culture is; it is almost statistically immeasurable. The faster this essential modification to our cultural heritage record can be carried out, the smaller the docu-
mentation area as follows:

1) In the field of documentation – systematic pres-
ervation campaigns do not exist so far – it is es-
sential to unite the most important lessons learned
and strategies developed by initiatives either exist-
ing or abandoned under the single roof of an inter-
national institution, that can guarantee persistent
existence, such as the Library of Congress or an

equivalent international institution. It would need
to be supported with adequate expertise from the

network of important archives and initiatives, orga-
nized in a corona around the long-lasting institution.

2) The establishment of an appropriate research
institution bringing together the best heads of the

field would be necessary. In Germany interdisciplin-
ary questions incorporating research on digital cul-
tures from computer games to avantgarde art are
too extensive for a single university. Thus, the Max
Planck Institute structure was created.

3) For current digital humanities, the funding struc-
tures must be internationalized in ways similar to

those enabling modern astronomy, genomics or
climatology. In order to create enough momentum and the necessary sustainability, sponsors like NSF, DFG, Getty, EU etc. need to ensure international

long-term sustainable structures. Only when we develop systematic and concerted strategies of collecting, preservation and research will we be
able to fulfill the task that digital culture demands
in the twenty-first century. In astronomy, funding agencies developed and modernized their systems
towards sustainability. The virtual observatory infrastructure is funded on an ongoing basis and
there is international coordination between more
than a dozen countries that produce astronomical
data.

A significant commitment has to be made for media
art research. Let’s recall the enormous and sustain-
ing infrastructure that was developed for traditional artistic media, painting, sculpture, architecture, even
film, photography and their corresponding archives
until now, no sustainable strategy exits. What is needed
is an appropriate structure to preserve at least the
usual one to six per cent of present media art produc-
tion, and the best works. If we compare the worldwide
available budget to preserve and explore traditional
art forms with the one for digital culture then we un-
derstand how inadequate the support for our present
digital culture is; it is almost statistically immeasurable.
The faster this essential modification to our cultural
heritage record can be carried out, the smaller the

Cubitt and Thomas, the exponents of an exclusion of
media art justify this by its connection with technol-
yogy. This confession truly is a disaster, not so much for
the interests of those people but for the tax-paying
public, who deserve the right to be enabled to think
about our time through media art. This ignorance is
not something we should just tolerate. It means that
although our societies’ political, financial, and cultural
infrastructures are increasingly driven by modern
technologies, the art market and a number of bien-
nales and state-financed contemporary art museums
deny the public, which pays their bills, the needed
aesthetic and intellectual confrontation with current
art. The attempt to separate art from its time is not
new, it is also comparable with earlier movements of
world escapism, like the forms of nineteenth-century
historicism. Our modern societies need to be enabled
to reflect on their time and future and media art plays
a seminal role in that process.

Media Art, as we understand, needs as many bridges as possible: conferences, new scientific tools like
databases and text repositories, new strategies for
documentation and visual analysis of complex data,
new curricula for the next generation of teachers and
collectors. Maybe in a near future we can create col-
lective tools, as represented in Christa Sommerer and
Laurent Mignonneau’s work The Living Web, which

generates a spatial sphere from search engines for

web images in a CAVE. Their work represents a new
instrument for visual analysis, with the option of
comparing up to one thousand images in a scientific
discussion. Captivating new visualization tools could
provide access to the BREATH of digital cultural pro-
duction. Coupled with the DEPTH of historical optical
media, new unpredictable understandings of today’s
image revolution can be enabled.
REFERENCES AND NOTES
8. For example: Ars Electronica, Austria; Transmediale, Ger- many; Intersociety of Electronic Arts (ISEA) Conference; Dutch Electronic Art Festival; European Media Art Festival, Germany; FLE, Brasil Microwave Festival Hung Kong; Korean Media Art Festival; Siggraph, a.
28. The evolution of media art has a long history and now a new technological variety has appeared. However, this art cannot be fully understood without its history. See Rudolf Arnheim, “The Coming and Going of Images,” Leonardo 33, no. 3 (2000): 167-168.
33. The content development of Refresh! was a highly collec- tive process. It involved three producing partners, a large advisory board, 2 chairs for each session, call and review for papers, a planning meeting in 2004, keynotes, poster session and the development of application content over the time of two and a half years. Before Banff could host the conference, this was organised by the team of the Database of Virtual Art / Archive of Digital Art (ADA). The international planning meeting at Vigoni/Italy in 2004 (hosted by ADA) agreed that it is of importance to bring media art history closer to the mainstream of art history cultivating a proximity to film-cultural and media studies, computer science, but also philosophy and other sciences. After nomination and acceptance of the chairs, coordinat- ed call for papers, review by the program committee and selection of speakers by the chairs organized and funded by the Database of Virtual Art – the conference brought together colleagues from the following fields: invited speakers (based on self description from bio) HISTORIES: Art History = 20; Media Science = 17; History of Science = 7; History of Ideas = 1; History of Technology = 1; ARTISTS/ CURATORS: Artists/Research = 25; Curators = 10; SOCIAL SCIE
SCIENCE: Communication/Semiotics = 6; Aesthetics/Philosophy = 5; Social History = 2; Political Science = 2; Woman Studies = 2; Theological Studies = 1; OTHER CULTURAL STUDIES: Film Studies = 3; Literature Studies = 3; Sound Studies = 3; Theatre Studies = 2; Performance Studies = 1; Architecture Studies = 1; Computer Science = 2; Astronomy 1.

34. Some of the conference results can be found in the anthology MediaArtHistories by Oliver Grau, ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); recently: Andreas Breckheim and Gunalan Nadarajan, eds., Place Studies in Art, Media, Science and Technology: Historical Investigations on the Sites and the Migration of Knowledge (Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2009).


41. While approaches of Media Archaeology by Zielinski or Hulttimo tend to focus on the media and instruments only, the MediaArtHistories approach investigates the arts and images as well and explores among other things the driving force the arts played historically for the development of the media. See Siegfried Zielinski, Deep Time of the Media (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); Erkki Hulttimo and Jussi Parikka, eds., Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications (Berkeley: California University Press, 2011); and Oliver Grau, ed., MediaArtHistories.


43. A prophet of the virtual museum André Malraux describes as “imaginary museum” or “museum without walls” collections of photographic reproductions comparing a large variety of ages and cultures in a virtual space that could never exist physically. André Malraux. Psychologie de l’art: Le Musée Imaginaire – La création artistique – La monnoye de l’objet (Geneva: Albert Skira, 1947).

44. The International Virtual Observatory Alliance (IVOA) was formed in June 2002 with a mission to “facilitate the international coordination and collaboration necessary for the development and deployment of the tools, systems and organisational structures necessary to enable the international utilisation of astronomical archives as an integrated and interoperating virtual observatory.” The IVOA now comprises 17 international IVO projects. IVOA’s website, www.ivoa.net (accessed September 28, 2012).

45. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Assessment assessed the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being. From 2001 to 2005, the MA involved the work of more than 1,360 experts worldwide. Their findings provide a state-of-the-art scientific appraisal of the condition and trends in the world’s ecosystems and the services they provide, as well as the scientific basis for action to conserve and use them sustainably.

46. The Human Genome Project was an international scientific research project with a primary goal to determine the sequence of chemical base pairs which make up DNA and to identify and map the approximately 20,000-25,000 genes of the human genome from both a physical and functional standpoint. The mega project started 1990 with the collective work of more than 1000 researchers in 40 countries, the plan was to achieve the goal in 2010. A working draft of the genome was released in 2000 and a complete one in 2003. See International Human Genome Sequencing Consortium, “Finishing the Euchromatic Sequence of the Human Genome,” Nature 431, no. 7011 (2004): 931-945.


49. Roy Ascott, Christiane Paul, Gunalan Nadarajan, Erkki Hulttimo, Jorge LaFerla, Martin Roth, et a.


52. The digitization of the collection is a project developed by the Department of Image Science at Danube University and conducted in cooperation with the Göttweig Monastery. The collection of prints at Göttweig Monastery, which itself was founded in 1087, is based on acquisitions made by various monks since the 15th century. The first report of graphic art kept in the monastery dates back to 1621, with an archive record that mentions a number of “tablets of copper engraving” (“Tafeln von Kupferstich”). The actual act of founding the collection is attributed to Abbot Gottfried Bessel whose systematic purchases in Austria and from abroad added remarkably a total of 20,000 pieces to the collection in a very short span of time. Reaching to the present day, the print collection at Göttweig Monastery has grown to be the largest private collection of historical graphic art in Austria with more than 30000 prints. The Department of Image Science’s digitization center at the Göttweig Monastery uses technology to scan paintings and prints from the collection (up to 72 million pixels).


